



Hunt Her Down (The Bullet Catchers Book 7)

By Roxanne St. Claire

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Fourteen years ago, undercover FBI agent Dan Gallagher watched his lover, Maggie Varcek, flee into the Miami night as gunfire exploded around them. Now a Bullet Catcher, Dan has learned that drug lord Ramon Jimenez is out of prison after the FBI bust Maggie unwittingly aided, and is looking for revenge. Determined to protect the woman who still haunts his memory, Dan tracks Maggie down, undercover once again -- until his identity is stunningly blown. Furious at his past betrayal, Maggie refuses Dan's help, yet the passion between them still burns irresistibly hot. Then Ramon strikes terrifyingly close. The Jimenez family will do anything to gain the key they believe Maggie holds to their hidden fortune, and the rejoined lovers are forced into a race against time, trying to unlock the secret before everything they hold most dear is destroyed...forever.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Hot, fun, fast, and fearless! I want one of these bodyguards!" -- *New York Times* bestselling author Cherry Adair

About the Author

Published since 2003, Roxanne St. Claire is a *New York Times* and *USA TODAY* bestselling author of more than forty romance and suspense novels. She has written several popular series, including Barefoot Bay, the Guardian Angelinos, and the Bullet Catchers. In addition to being an eight-time nominee and one-time winner of the prestigious RITA™ Award for the best in romance writing, Roxanne's novels have won the National Reader's Choice Award for best romantic suspense four times, as well as the Maggie, the Daphne du Maurier Award, the HOLT Medallion, Booksellers Best, Book Buyers Best, the Award of Excellence, and many others. She lives in Florida with her husband, and still attempts to run the lives of her teenage daughter and twenty-something son. She loves dogs, books, chocolate, and wine, but not always in that order. Find out more at RoxanneStClaire.com, at [Twitter.com/RoxanneStClaire](https://twitter.com/RoxanneStClaire), and at [Facebook.com/RoxanneStClaire](https://facebook.com/RoxanneStClaire).

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Chapter One

Fourteen Years Later

All he wanted to do was make a clean getaway.

But Dan Gallagher knew the minute he stepped out of the Bullet Catchers' headquarters that this exit would be anything but clean.

Leaning against his Maserati was the one person who wouldn't let him get away with anything.

"Slinking out so soon?" Max asked, crossing his arms over his massive chest, his hair still sweaty from the company touch football game.

"Slinking is generally done through the back door, Roper. I'm going out the way I came in."

Max narrowed dark eyes at Dan. "Out for good?"

"Out for now."

"You're crushed."

Dan laughed. "No, but if you don't get out of my way, you will be." He pulled his keys out. "I got a plane to catch."

"Not taking a Bullet Catcher jet?" Of course he didn't move.

"Nope. It's personal business."

Max just cocked his head, never wasting a word. They hadn't had "personal business" they didn't share in twenty years.

"Come on," Dan said. "I'm seriously late getting to the airport."

"Did she tell you everything?" Max asked.

Dan glanced up to the second-story window overlooking the drive, to Lucy Sharpe's private library and office. She'd probably gone to the back patio to celebrate with the others. These were happy days for her company. For her.

"She didn't have to tell me anything. It's all over her glowing face. And I'm delighted for her."

Max choked. "Delighted?"

"What?" Dan countered. "You don't believe I'm not happy that a woman I've worked for and been friends with for years has found..." Freedom from whatever misery had kept her in an emotional prison for a long time? He'd never had the key to that jail cell, but Jack Culver had proven himself more than capable. "Has found bliss," he finished.

"Delighted and bliss in the same speech?"

"Shut up. She's happy, and I'm..." Free to move on. "Happy for her. We're all just one big, happy Bullet Catcher family. And a growing one, at that." At Max's look, he just shook his head. "I swear to God, I'm not lying."

"You're rationalizing. Which is another word for *lying*, only to yourself. And while your ability to bend the truth has served you well in countless undercover situations, this is real life."

Dan scowled at him. "Did aliens come and take Mad Max Roper? Or has marriage and fatherhood turned you into Dr. Phil? And since when isn't a UC situation real life?"

"I'm worried about you."

"Fear not, my man. I've never been better. I'm free."

"Free."

"Yeah. Free. Lucy, in case you haven't surmised from her radiance, has made the ultimate commitment with Culver. Do I agree with her choice of partners?" He shrugged. "Not my problem. Do I wish it was me up there perusing a baby name book? Hell, no. I know you think you've cracked the code with Cori and little Peyton, and maybe you have. But I don't want that key. I like the status quo."

Unrelenting brown eyes narrowed. "More rationalizing."

"Call it whatever you want." He gave Max's meaty shoulder a smack with the file in his hand. "Now go eat some charred meat like a good Rottweiler. You're missing the party and all the gossip about the reasons behind my leave of absence."

"A leave of absence, with a Bullet Catcher dossier still warm from the Research and Investigative Department printer?"

The son of a bitch didn't miss a trick. "Just grabbed a file on an old friend I might look up in the Keys."

"You're going to Florida? Cori and I are going down to Miami tomorrow, to her place on Star Island. Why don't you stay with us for a few days?"

"And get psychoanalyzed by the two of you? No thanks. Anyway, I'll be a couple of hours south, in Marathon."

"Doing what?" Max pressed.

"Fishing."

"You don't own a tackle box. What's going on down there?"

"Nothing." He hoped. "I'm taking some time to myself. See an old friend. Learn the difference between a trout and a...nother kind of fish."

"Who's the old friend?"

It was a waste of time to try and sidestep him. "A young lady I knew from my Miami days."

Max's wheels visibly turned. "Not the girl from the Venezuelan money laundering ring?"

Dan sighed. "Do you have to have a memory like a steel trap?"

"How could I forget? For one thing, the takedown of Alonso Jimenez and company was a major operation that involved the DEA and the FBI. And, not exactly a *lady*, as I recall, though she was young then."

He bristled at the comment. "She's fourteen years older now."

"So instead of licking new wounds, you're going to open old ones?" Max asked.

"The only thing I'm planning to lick is salt with my tequila."

"You sure that's smart, when you're on the rebound and all?"

Dan leaned right in his friend's face. "Let's get this straight, Roper. I'm not on the rebound and I don't need you to judge what's smart and what's not." He pulled back. "But since you're so damn nosy, I still have access to some of the FBI sites and I noticed that Ramon Jimenez got out of prison recently."

"El Viejo's son?"

"Yeah." Everyone who knew the case knew Alonso Jimenez was universally referred to as "El Viejo" -- the old man. "I just want to make sure she's okay."

"You think he'll go after her?"

Dan shrugged. "She was never implicated or arrested, and, per my request, she was left out of the trial since her testimony was superfluous, considering all the evidence we had. As far as she or any of them know, Michael Scott -- my cover name -- was accidentally killed that night in friendly fire. That's the way the agency wanted to play it. But Ramon has had a long time to put together the truth, and he might have figured out the leak was his girlfriend. He's a rat bastard, and I don't trust him."

"So what's your plan? Spring your real identity on her?"

"God, no. And she'll never recognize me, because that cover was thorough and the guy she knew had brown eyes, dark hair, and a prosthetic nose. I just want to check out where she lives and works, make sure she's safe. She goes by Smith now, so she's probably married with kids."

"Could be an alias and she's living in fear that they'll find her."

The same thought had occurred to him. "If that's the case, then I'll introduce myself as a former FBI agent who thinks she should be aware that Ramon Jimenez is out of prison. Then I'll leave, and she'll be safer. This is strictly a standard security check after a prison release. After I'm done, I'll be back." Probably. He gave Max a tight smile.

"Culver is a fact of our life, now," Max said, a warning in his voice. "Can you live with that?"

"Look, I know Lucy and I flirted with possibilities. But it would have screwed up a great friendship, and I'm not interested in..." A *baby*. "Anything that would tie me down. She knows that, and so do I."

Finally satisfied, Max moved. "Call me when you get there."

Dan reached for the car door. "Why would I even need a wife, when I have you?"

"And the invitation stands. Cori has a week of board meetings at Peyton Enterprises, and I'm going to go apeshit and melt in the heat. Hang out with me in Miami Beach."

"You're so full of it. You love all that time with Peyton."

Max beamed at the mention of his two-year-old. "It doesn't suck."

"Who woulda thunk it? Max Roper morphs into Father of the Year."

"Don't knock what you haven't tried."

Dan circled his throat and mock-choked, then took one more glance at the library window. He'd never have gone there with Lucy, so she really was better off now. He climbed into the car and shut the door.

Snapping on the CD player, he cranked up the volume, then took off down the driveway with the familiar relief that once again he'd successfully dodged a bullet.

"Oh, please, not *again*." Maggie clunked the empty tray on the service bar and put her hands over her ears but it did nothing to drown out the music echoing through Smitty's. "I swear, I'm going to go down to Margaritaville myself and shoot Jimmy Buffett for recording it."

"That'll just make 'em want to hear it more." From his favorite bar stool, Gumbo Joe threw her a wide, yellow-toothed smile. "Anyhoo, you're the one who put a jukebox in this joint, Lena. Smitty'd roll over in his grave if he saw how you turned his nice little watering hole into a tourist trap full of northerners who want to get wasted away again."

"Smitty, God rest his soul, *ought* to roll over in his grave, for the debt he left me in." She flipped the service door up and slipped behind the bar, dumping the empties into the recycle bin. "And I see the transformation from bait bar to tourist trap hasn't stopped you from swilling one dollar AmberBocks every Friday night, Gumbo."

"Well, a man's gotta drink after a hard day of trawlin'." He took a swig to underscore the statement while Maggie headed to the cash register to ring up the pitcher of draft she'd just served.

She hip-nudged Brandy out of the way, but not hard enough to make the superskilled bartender splash a drop of the tequila she was pouring. "Don't forget the lost shaker of salt."

Brandy gave her a wry smile and lifted the tequila bottle. "Every time that tune comes on we sell more of this shit, and the markup is pure profit, partner. That song is what you would call a good sign."

"Ka-ching!" Maggie exclaimed as the drawer popped open.

Brandy turned, expertly threading her fingers around six shot glasses. "Oh, and speaking of good signs. Look who just came in. Your boyfriend's back."

Maggie froze, a little thrill tickling her tummy. "Don't care."

"You lie, Lena Smith."

"I never lie, Brandy Istre, and you know that. But I'm not looking, because I don't care."

"You should look, because, whoa, he is even hotter than the last two nights he's been in here, checking you out like you were his favorite library book."

Maggie rolled her eyes, closing the cash register with a quiet click. "Whatev, as Quinn would say."

"In case you change your mind,..."

Users Review

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